



# SOUTHEAST NEWS

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## **New Conference Minister & Family Arrive** ***Welcome to the Timothy Downs/Carol Kobayashi family!***

In early July Tim, Carol, Kris and Andrew arrived on the Atlanta scene. They are in their home (not far from Northlake Mall), doing all those wonderful “let’s get settled in a new place” things. At the same time, Tim is very actively getting acquainted with both the churches and the people of the Southeast Conference at an amazing pace. Between the meetings he is setting up his office with all the books, etc. he brought with him.

*A few of the things I have learned about Tim so far:*

1. He cares about God and God’s people.
2. He will listen to your story with an open heart.
3. He wants to know all sides before prayerfully deciding on a course of action.
4. He has a wonderful sense of humor and loves to laugh.
5. He is an accepting, “where do we go from here” person.
6. He is brave enough to go white water rafting!!
7. He is excellent in the pulpit.
8. He loves his family enough to make time for them.
9. He is a man who is full of grace.

*A glimpse at the other members of this wonderful family:*

Kris, the older son, is 15. His greatest love is playing the bass guitar. Kris loves music of all kinds. Andrew, the younger son, is 13 and loves challenging computer games. He also has a flair for dramatics—a budding Thespian! And Carol Kobayashi is a computer programmer, loves to do children’s stories in the worship setting and does quilting. Like Tim, Carol loves their family enough to be sure they have quality time together. She is a very intelligent, warm, down-to-earth person.

New beginnings are special times. There is a lot to be done; there is always a certain amount of settling in to do. But, you know what? They can be the most exciting times for all of us! New opportunities, new visions, new personalities—all working together as children of God. We are one people. Hallelujah!

## ***From “Our” Missionaries Karl & Jan***

*Yokwe* (hello, goodbye, peace, love)! We’re here—we made it! This place is really different! It’s very beautiful—ocean, lagoon, coconut palms, bananas, breadfruit and papayas—and loads of sun—what more could you want?!

We’ve been put in a tiny pink apartment with the ocean about 100 years behind us, and the lagoon about 75 years in the front. Majuro is small, but not as small as we imagined! We’ve been working at setting up housekeeping and acclimating ourselves to the much hotter climate. I will be teaching at the Uliga Protestant School and by the sounds of it, Karl will be traveling pretty much between the islands.

Tell everyone hello for us. Our address here is: Karl and Jan Whiteman, P.O. Box 3278, Majuro, MH 96960. A 32-cent stamp does it! *We’d love to hear from y’all!!!*

## **UCC National Teleconference September 14 “Freedom of Conscience and the Radical Religious Right”**

We are set up in two sites to view and be a part of this national teleconference on “Freedom of Conscience and the Radical Religious Right.” In Atlanta, GA, the site is 106 Cannon Chapel, Candler School of Theology, Emory University campus (free parking at the Peavine Parking Deck off South Kilgo Circle). In Nashville, TN, the site is Downstairs Auditorium I, Learning Resources Center, Meharry Medical College, Albion Street. One of our own, Andrew Young, will be part of the national teleconference people!

Registration – 11:45 a.m., Atlanta; 10:45 a.m., Nashville.

Orientation – Topic introduction & bag lunch – 12 Noon, Atlanta;  
11:00 a.m., Nashville

Telecast – 1-2:30, Atlanta; 12-1:30, Nashville

Discussion, Planning and Strategizing – 2:30-4:30, Atlanta; 1:30-3:30,  
Nashville

Bring a bag lunch; coffee & tea provided, also material for note taking. We'll be using specially prepared curriculum materials from national agencies of the UCC. We hope for a good turnout! Please call to let us know you are coming. In Atlanta, call Nan Wright at the Southeast Conference office by Monday, September 9. In Nashville, call Ted Braun, 615/277-5135 on Thursday, September 12.

## ***Southeast Conference Association Annual Meetings***

Come one, come all!!! Make your plans now to attend your association's annual meeting '96!! The time of gathering for each of our four associations is rapidly approaching. Every fall during the months of September and October the churches and the people within each association meet together to celebrate community and transact the business for that association.

*This year the scheduled for meeting is as follows:*

Alabama/Tennessee Association will meet Friday evening-Saturday, September, 6-7 at Fairfield Glade Community Church in Fairfield Glade, TN;

Georgia/South Carolina Association gathers in Charleston, SC Friday evening-Saturday, September 13-14;

South Alabama/Northwest Florida Association will meet Saturday, October 5, at New Hope Congregational Christian in Clio, AL (pronounced "cow" with an "l" in it);

East Alabama/West Georgia Association will come together Saturday, October 19, at Congregational Christian in East Tallassee, AL.

*Our new Conference Minister, Tim Downs, plans to be in attendance at each association annual meeting, so this is a perfect opportunity to "break bread" with him. It is also an opportunity to acquaint him with your*

association and with how you see God being served through your association. Annual meetings are always of “possibilities” and “family community” as well as business meetings. Blessings abound where we share God’s love with one another. *Come, share, and be blessed!*

## ***From Ed Mehlhaff ...***

*To the Saints of Southeast Conference,*

Dona and I express our profound appreciation for your countless prayers, phone calls, and wonderful cards sent our way during my recovery from quadruple by-pass surgery. Since your overtures were so numerous, I am choosing this means to convey our gratitude for your thoughtful attention to my health struggle. What a wonderful family the UCC is!!

I am convinced that the ordeal was survivable because so many of you cared and buoyed us in so many ways.

Our faith and appreciation of family, friends, community, local church, and the whole UCC was affirmed and greatly deepened, and is all the more valued. You were all such a significant presence!

I am healing and gaining strength daily. My team doctor says I have another 350,000 miles left in me.

Thank God for all of you and your love so freely shared! It is our hope to see many of you in the years ahead!

*Our thanks and love,  
Ed and Dona*

## **CONFERENCE MINISTER**

Dear friends,

It is good to be here as your conference minister! I started on Monday, July 22nd amidst heaps of unread mail, piles of telephone messages to be answered, files which have no homes, and books still in their boxes.

What is it like to start here? The image that comes to my mind is one of a deep and dense fog. Every once in a while a truck may thunder through the mist and demand my attention. I’m aware that there is a

world out there, yet the shapes and the form in that world are not clear. But most of the time I am beginning to see some of the outlines that are you, your congregation, your communities, and in those moments suddenly the fog is not as deep or dense.

The warmth and hospitality which so many of you have extended have been lights along my path as I have tried to find my next steps. Your humor and spirit at the gatherings at which we have met one another have shown me the outlines of a sense of community and belonging which I look forward to building with you. You have inundated me with generous invitations to visit your congregation and to preach. In the next few weeks I look forward to being in touch with you and scheduling time to visit you.

As we enter the month of September I look forward to being with you at the association annual meetings. My priorities in these first few months are the following:

- 1) to meet with and listen to as many of you as possible to get a sense of your hopes, your dreams, your struggles;

- 2) to working with your capable Conference leadership in helping the Board and its committees and commissions function to meet your needs and respond to your priorities.

- 3) to visit with as many congregations as possible to preach, to teach and to listen.

- 4) to take the steps necessary to bring healing where there has been brokenness and pain in our fellowship.

Out of these first steps I look forward to beginning to shape with you the vision toward which we are called as a conference and as a precious part of the United Church of Christ. These are exciting times with the possibility of new beginnings. You are a spirited and diverse community with many gifts to equip us for “the living of these days.”

It is truly a blessing to get to know you, and to work with your capable leaders, and the committed staff in the Southeast Conference Office. May God bless each of us as we prepare to join hands for this journey.

In Faith,  
Timothy C. Downs  
Conference Minister

## ***Iowa-Southeast Partnership Work Camp '96***

On June 1, 1996, Mert and Evvie Fedderson of Iowa, after bringing greetings and gifts from the Iowa Conference to the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting at Sewanee, TN, were joined by two other carloads of Southeast people and headed northwest on I-24. A van conversion with people from Crossville and Pleasant Hill, TN, also sped toward Pilgrim Heights campground, Montour, IA. Later, another couple from Tennessee joined the work camp, as did four other couples and two individuals from Iowa.

At Pilgrim Heights, the group kept their eyes away from the Meskwahde Casino, but applied their ears and hands to many tasks at the campground. They put preservative on a railing beside the lake near the dining hall, while others built a deck, ramp and railing into the dining hall. We stripped and painted tables and benches in the large craft building, painted the craft building inside and out, painted two other small buildings and the windows of Butternut cabin. We sealed seams and tested 19 tents (the wind almost blew them into the lake), cleaned and checked out two Coleman lanterns and some Coleman stoves.

Meanwhile Bonnie Blum, on the Iowa Partnership Committee, had us install a disc golf course as a memorial to her husband, Dick. Her son-in-law, Randy Bower, laid out the 9-hole course, and helped dig the postholes. After cement hardened, her daughter Julie, the U.S. champion woman disc golfer, played the course and praised it.

Others of us put two new ceiling fans in the kitchen, finding no raccoons at home in the attic, but finding lots of electric cables with no juice. They eventually got a live wire.

We also cleaned rooftops and gutters of leaves and acorns, put a new counter in the camp office and cleaned flower beds. Bill and Anna Schorman and Ralph Galt sawed, split and piled enough cords of firewood to probably last into the next century.

*Our group shared a wonderful spirit of fun and fellowship as we worked, worshipped and played together. The camp staff gave us marvelous hospitality and excellent cooking. Evenings we were entertained by a cowbell choir from Haverhill and God's Kids puppet team from Tama. One evening we*

*had a fire in the fireplace of the lodge. The smoke alarm nearly deafened us until the chimney began to draw, and then we enjoyed popcorn and singing together.*

Those taking part were, from Iowa: B. & C. Barnes, B. Baum, R. & J. Bower, A. & H. DeGraaf, M. & E. Fedderson, and M. & L. From Crossville, R. & T. Braun, C. Johnson, and B. and W. Welch. From Pleasant Hill Community: R. Galt, L. King, C. & J. Lord, and B. & A. Schorman.

Charlie Lord, co-chair  
Iowa-Southeast Partnership Committee

## ***Garden City and the Olympia Torch***

**by Melba Price**

Our town of Garden City, Alabama, has been very involved in preparations to welcome the '96 Olympic Torch Relay. We're a small, rural town with only about 600 people in our city limits. City government and citizens joined together to wash, paint, repair, plant, refurbish, etc., all over town. Flags lined our two-mile main street. Banners were hung on buildings and were displayed in yards. Red, white and blue was everywhere. Our Torch Day was June 29.

About three weeks before the torch was due, Channel 13, NBC, in Birmingham sent a crew to our town. They did both live and taped segments for their show. *Our Congregational Christian Church was featured on one of these segments.*

*Our building is an historic one. It was the first church in Garden City and is 112 years old. Built in 1884 by German immigrant settlers from Chicago, it was a Lutheran church. Services (in German) were held there until 1920. It was then sold to our newly formed Congregational Church. The building remains the same in structure, with only a steeple and front portico added. In 1978, its sturdy weatherboard was covered with white aluminum siding.*

*Channel 13 filmed the church ground and both exterior and interior of the church. Our pastor, Roger Whitley, was interviewed in the sanctuary. The background music, "Sweet Hour of Prayer," was provided for the show by our church organist, Katie Whitley. The people of our church were grateful and excited for the opportunity to witness in this way.*

When Torch Day arrived, we had hundreds of neighbors from other communities join us. At the City Hall grounds, the mayor, Roland Johnson, welcomed our guests. Free hot dogs and Coca-Colas were served. A patriotic program featured a "Community Choir" (from all churches), Girl Scouts, National Anthem, Pledge, etc. Then the crowds lined our long main street waiting to cheer the torch-bearer on his way. It was a very special day in Garden City, Alabama!

## ***Missionary from South Africa visiting Pilgrimage, Marietta, GA***

The Rev. Dr. Diane Wicks serving St. George's United Church in Joubert Park, Johannesburg, is visiting the Atlanta area September 14-18. She will be staying with Rev. Tim and Marta Morrison while in town. Tim served in Africa for several years and so has a special interest in what is happening in the mission field over there. Diane will be preaching at Pilgrimage's Sunday service on September 15 as well as speaking with the congregation and the youth afterward.

Diane's most exciting work at St. George's is with the homeless. She has been developing a newsletter called *Homeless Talk* which is written and sold by the homeless. She works with those in this program to develop ideas for the paper, improve writing skills, and develop work skills. *Homeless Talk* provides an income for people and also gives them a voice in the society. More than 450,000 copies have been sold in the past two years, putting more than \$100,000 into the pockets of hundreds of Homeless Talk sellers.

Diane's missionary work is challenging and exciting. Please feel free to join with the congregation of Pilgrimage on the 15th to hear more of Diane's work.

## ***Consecrating Stewards***

by Rev. Earl D. Miller

As fall approaches so does the annual time for reflection on our financial commitment to God. Rev. Miller has developed a program over



many year called the "Consecrating Steward" which some of our churches are already using with a great deal of satisfaction and enrichment for their members. Perhaps this is due to the philosophy behind the program—"the need of the giver to give for his or her own spiritual development, rather than the need of the church to receive."

Conference Minister Tim Downs recommends this program. We have purchased several copies of it to have it available to you in the Conference Office. It is exciting to know there is a stewardship program in the United Church of Christ that enhances our spiritual lives, as we learn to open our hands to God whose hands are always open to us.

## ***Reflections on "Visions and Voices"***

Over 1500 women gathered in historic Boston June 27-30 for the third national meeting of UCC women. With the help of extraordinary leadership, the women examined and reflected on the story of Pentecost "Visions and Voices" of our faith for the world of today and the coming 21st century.

Over a dozen women and at least 2 men attended from the Southeast Conference to experience the uplifting fellowship of the spirit-filled gathering. Inspiring worship services, Bible study, wide-ranging workshops and forums as well as special healing services helped to feed the souls and minds of the participants. To experience the power of such a gathered community is a blessing. To examine and reflect on one's faith in the company of committed sisters from all walks of life and regions of the country is a special opportunity. The gathered community in Boston was truly "a gift to one another." The music was marvelous, and included both new and familiar expressions and images of faith. The preaching was prophetic and served to both comfort and challenge the spirits of us all.

Through the insightful words of Barbara Ehrenreich and June Goudy we looked at the wider world and considered our role in caring for all of God's children. The powerful preaching of Bernice Powell Jackson and Christine Smith helped us realize that we must be about doing something to help say a resounding "No" to the greed and violence present in the world today.

These speakers and leaders of the workshops and forums served to enlighten and empower the women in attendance with the knowledge and conviction of the urgent need for all Christians to be about living and doing the words of Christ to "Love One Another."

Michelle Ann Sabine

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Boston is home territory for me, so I looked forward to the 4th National Women's Event with great anticipation. I especially wanted time to connect with friends from former parishes, as well as my family.

The highlight of the meeting for me was the Thursday evening opening worship. It was well planned and beautiful, with a powerful message from Bernice Powell Jackson. An exciting series of Bible studies was conducted by Valerie Tutson, a storyteller and dramatist from Rhode Island. In addition, the music, under the direction of Elaine Kirkland and Kathy Wonson Eddy, was a huge inspiration for me.

An outstanding debate between Jean Christine Goudey of Bangor Theological Seminary and Imani Sheila Newsome-McLaughlin of Boston University provided needed attention to our attitudes of racism and our faith, and what each of us needs to do to be accountable.

My hope is that our churches make it possible for more young women to attend the Women's Event in the year 2000. Let's begin planning now, to encourage participation.

Carolyn O'Brien

## **AROUND THE CONFERENCE**

### *Church News*

Welcome to Tom Baird, service as interim at Belvidere, First United.

Also to Dale Marshall, who has just begun as pastor of Community Church, Fairfield Glade.

Welcome to Budd Friend-Jones, who begins as pastor of Central, Atlanta on September 8.

Arthur Dailey has resigned from First Congregational Christian, Alexander City, AL ... and David Naglee has resigned from LaGrange, United

Congregational Christian—both of these pastors have served long and well!

*In Search of Pastoral Leadership*

*Pastor:*

Atlanta, GA—First Congregational UCC

Belvidere, TN—First United Church UCC

Deer Lodge, TN—Congregational Morgan County Parish

Jonesboro, GA—Trinity United Church

LaGrange, GA—United Congregational Christian

Montgomery, AL—First Congregational Christian

Pine Mountain, GA—Oak Grove Congregational Christian

Roanoke, AL—North Main Congregational Christian

Waverly, TN—United Community Church

*Associate Pastor:*

Atlanta, GA—Central Congregational UCC

Cullman, AL—St. John's United

*Prayers & Concerns*

June Haislip Hughes, pastor of United Christian Church in Crossville, TN, fell down a flight of stairs this summer and suffered broken bones. She is mending well. Encouraging cards may be sent to her at 1010 Ewa Drive, Crossville, TN 38857.

Ed Mehlhaff is doing very well after his quadruple bypass. He's back behind the wheel of his car now.

Let's remember to send our prayers to Karl and Jan Whiteman as they minister in the Marshall Islands!

*Our sympathy is extended* to the family of Trudi Sanford Schneider. Trudi was a long time member of the United Church of Christ with membership in Central Congregational Church until she moved to Oregon some years ago. She was also a very active worker within the Conference—especially with youth. Trudi died May 13th.

## ***A Pilgrimage to American***

# ***College in South India***

**by Dick and Joyce Reisz**

*A PILGRIMAGE in 1996? And to SOUTH INDIA? And to a COLLEGE?*

Well, these three ideas which may seem out of place in modern life actually came about for some UCC members in January-February, with the inspiration of a very special college and under the leadership of Dick and Joyce Reisz, retired missionaries of the UCBWM, and members of the Pleasant Hill (TN) UCC. HISTORIC CONNECTIONS!

The college, located in Madurai was started by the “ancestors” of the UCBWM in 1881, and still retains fraternal ties with the UCC and many of its members. It has been self-governed for more than 60 years, but continues the missionary tradition of promoting intellectual and moral responsibility, spiritual growth and social responsibility, all within a Christian context.

Dr. Peter Jayapandian, Principal of American College, made a visit to the United States in May 1994 and proposed a South India pilgrimage (SIP-96) to the college by a group of interested persons from the United States. Purpose? To spend a month at the college exploring and experiencing the cultural heritage and the Christian heritage of South India.

## **RICH PROGRAM**

In the event, 22 pilgrims left USA in mid-January with eager expectations for the experience of a lifetime. Their expectations were abundantly rewarded! The college met the pilgrimage in Madras for a few days of orientation and visits to churches, homes and historic sites. On to Madurai, where the college has arranged a busy program in which the pilgrims entered into the life of the college through campus orientation, religious services, lectures and personal contacts with faculty, alumni and students. The daily program included lectures given by experts from the college and from nearby university departments as well as other nearby institutions. The informative but informed nature of these interactions gave the pilgrimage a lot of chance to know their new friends in some depth.

Church history—college history—social stratification—the Indian political scene—Indian cinema and arts—the place of women in

society—perspectives on family life—educational expectation—these are just a very few of the dozens of fascinating topics. What a rich menu was presented!

The lectures were supplemented by group visits to many cultural features of Madurai and its surroundings. Temples—schools—rock-inscription sites—dance performances—music academy—“Madurai-by-night” (a rooftop experience! Unforgettable!)—all helped the pilgrims understand the people and the complex life of this ancient city in which the college is set.

Pilgrims reciprocated with chapel preaching, seminars for faculty, speeches to alumni and individual sharing of their own interests. One pilgrim, a devoted railroad buff, got to meet an engine driver at the local railroad yard and join in the cab and throttle of an engine!

And there was time for a recreational visit for three days to a nearby wildlife area. Many exciting experiences watching unique birds and mammals of South India! Time also for a new-to-many experience of a special cricket game in which some of the pilgrims tried to participate.

#### FAITHFUL FRIENDS

And time too to interact with Christians of the region and to share faith with each other. To experience new worship modes, to appreciate Christian faith in a Hindu context and to form with new brothers and sisters bonds of appreciation and love. An appreciation too of the strategic role which Christian education has in contemporary India and the many distinctive contributions which are made by American College.

The College wants to repeat this pilgrimage—SIP-97! If interested write the principal, c/o American College, Madurai, INDIA 625 002, or call Roger Wiehe at (508) 475-1491.

## CONFERENCE CALENDAR, 1996

### September

2 – Mon.	Labor Day – OFFICE CLOSED
6-7 Fri.-Sat.	AL/TN Association Annual Meeting, Fairfield Glade, TN; Community
9-12 Mon.-Wed.	Council of Conference Ministers; Tim in Cleveland
13-14 Fri.-Sat.	GA/SC Association Annual Meeting, Charleston, SC; Plymouth Congregational

14 – Sat.	UCC national teleconference, “Freedom of Conscience & the Radical Religious Right” – GA/SC – Atlanta, Cannon Chapel, Candler School of Theology, Emory University campus; AL/TN – Nashville, Learning Resources Center, Meharry Medical College
14 – Sat.	Rosh Hashanah
15 – Sun.	Diane Wicks, World Board missionary to South Africa, preaches at Pilgrimage, Marietta, GA
20-22 Fri.-Sun.	Southeast Conference Women’s Retreat, Shocco Springs, Talladega, AL
23 – Mon.	Yom Kippur
27-28 Fri.-Sat.	Southeast Conference Board of Directors, Atlanta, GA; Central Congregational
29 – Sun.	Tim preaches – Trinity, Jonesboro
29-Oct. 5	Christian Education Week

### **October**

5 – Sat.	SAL/NWFL Association Annual Meeting, Clio, AL
6 – Sun.	Neighbors in Need all-church offering; World Communion Sunday
13 – Sun.	Laity Sunday
14 – Mon.	Indigenous People’s Day; Columbus Day
19 – Sat.	EAL/WGA Association Annual Meeting, East Tallassee, AL
24 – Thur.	United Nations Day
27 – Sun.	Daylight Saving Time end Tim preaches – First Church, Atlanta
31 – Fri.	Reformation Day

### **November**

1 –3 Fri.-Sun.	“Festival of Life” Celebration, Pleasant Hill, TN; Tim preaches Sunday
3 – Sun.	Trinity, Jonesboro, GA – Anniversary – Millard Fuller preaches
5 – Tues.	Election Day
8-9 Fri.-Sat.	Annual Program Planning Workshop – Atlanta
10 – Sun.	Stewardship Sunday
11 – Mon.	Veterans Day
15-16 Fri.-Sat.	Personnel Committee Meeting, Atlanta
17 – Sun.	Congregational Christian Church, Lanett, AL Centennial
23 – Sat.	GA/SC Church and Ministry Meeting, Center Church, Atlanta
24 – Sun.	Thanksgiving Sunday Hunger Action Fund (suggested offering date)
28 – Thur.	Thanksgiving Day – OFFICE CLOSED

### **December**

1 – Sun.	World AIDS Day/First Sunday of Advent
4-8 Wed.-Sun.	OCLL meeting – Tim in Chicago
6 – Fri.	First Day of Hanukkah

10 – Tues.	Human Rights Day
22 – Sun.	Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross (suggested date)
24 – Tues.	Christmas Eve
25 – Wed.	Christmas Day – OFFICE CLOSED
31 – Tue.	New Year's Even

**January**

1 – Wed.	New Year's Day – OFFICE CLOSED
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## **THE SOUTHEAST NEWS**

Published by the Southeast Conference

United Church of Christ

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Treasurer, David Speno

Alabama-Tennessee Association Moderator, Ed Schneider

East Alabama-West Georgia Association Moderator, Jimmy Pilkington

Georgia-South Carolina Association Moderator, Larry Calbert

South Alabama-Northwest Florida Association Moderator, Marvin Brand

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